

# Center brings Indian thoughts, values to Mass.

Indic studies director says goal is to teach people to welcome diversity

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**D**ARTMOUTH, Mass. — A new center at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth held an inauguration recently to officially kick off its campaign to promote Indic thoughts, values and traditions.

Bal Ram Singh, director of the Center for Indic Studies, said that about 350 people attended the event, which was held at the university.

According to Singh, the center's mission is to educate about issues relating to Indian arts, philosophy, societal values and customs; to promote international harmony through the mix of ancient and modern values; and to promote awareness among Americans on contemporary India and its diversity.

"We want to teach people to not just be tolerant, but also welcome diversity," he said. Singh is from Uttar Pradesh and has been a professor of biophysical chemistry at UMass Dartmouth for the last 11 years.

Singh said that immediate plans for the center include continuing a lecture series on cultural topics, summer courses on Indian traditions, yoga classes and research projects.

He added that the University of Massachusetts approved the Center for Indic Studies last November and over the course



**A lamp-lighting ceremony is performed by Indian studies professor David Frawley, center, at the inauguration of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's Center for Indic Studies. From left: Yogi Satyam, Dr. Dinesh Patel and Shashi Tripathi.**

of the past year the center has already held several seminars and a Hindu Heritage Day celebration. This year, he continued, the center has its own office at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth campus.

Singh said that what separates the center from other university Indian programs is that the center is not part of a specific department and therefore does not have to focus on just language or music or history—it can address all three and more.

"Being our own center gives us tremendous freedom to do whatever we come up

with," said Sukalyan Sengupta, who, along with Singh, is one of about a dozen UMass Dartmouth professors associated with the center. "The interdisciplinary aspect is very important."

Sengupta pointed out that the professors who are part of the center come from different departments at the university, including physics, computer science, business management and finance.

Sengupta is a professor of civil and environmental engineering. The Calcutta-native came to the UMass Dartmouth in 1994.

He added that some of the broad-ranging projects include compiling a statistical database of Indian-Americans in the professional world on the one hand and hosting the World Association of Vedic Studies' biennial conference next summer on another.

Sengupta also has high hopes for running a summer camp for Indian-American youths.

"We will try to give them a sense of where they are coming from in terms of their tradition," he said. "They are growing up without much of their culture and tradition and we have to bring it to them."

T.K. Roy, who has taught at UMass Dartmouth for over 20 years, said that forming such a center had been the minds of the university's Indian-American professors long before the official process of doing so was started two summers ago.

Roy, a Bengali, said he has worked to expose the local community to the culture of India for years and now he hopes the center can take this campaign to the next level.

Singh said the center will be funded primarily through donations from the Indian-American community. Those who donated \$10,000 or more will be called founders and become part of the center's advisory board.

He said that the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has pledged to match funds donated at the rate of 50 percent. The goal, he added, is to collect an endowment of \$1 million, which will be used to fund the center from year to year.

Singh said that in June a fund-raising dinner was held for the center and about \$35,000 was collected.